

## Learning Trust and Obedience

Can we trust the Lord to use our time wisely? Have any of us felt like obedience meant doing something that was less important than everything else we had to do? I have.

When pastoring a couple of churches in Nebraska, having enough time to get things done was always a challenge. At the time I received the phone call my days were filled with pastoral responsibilities for both churches, trying to complete a film to promote Christian camping for youth, and continuing the production of 30 second to one-minute messages for radio and television.

Generally, that's the work that needed some immediate attention when answering the phone. Yes, this was long before cell phones or any other means of digital communications. The call was from one of the members of one of the two churches, so after asking her what I could do to help she said the following:

"Well, my brother is in the hospital and he's supposed to get out this afternoon, so I was wondering if you'd go visit him before he gets out today?" Now this was not a quick dash to a hospital nearby. The hospital was around sixty miles away, so close to two-and-a-half hours of my day would be used up.

While listening to her, my mind struggled to recall if I'd ever met her brother. Was there any direct connection between him and the church? Had he ever attended anything, or might he possibly attend in the future? Did he know the Lord as his Savior? All questions I asked her politely.

Her answers meant her brother knew the Lord, he had never, and would never have any connection to our church. As we talked another part of my brain was reaching out to the Lord asking if this was something He wanted me to do. Hoping the Lord would answer "No" to this question I kept searching for that answer because I wanted to get on with my day as planned.

When she finished asking my reluctant answer had to be "Yes". That didn't make me happy. Why go see this guy I will literally never see again. He was already a member of a church in the town where he lived, so I could see no point in stopping what I was doing for this interruption.

Now, I must confess that I complained to the Lord and questioned Him all the way to the hospital. "Lord, You know going to hospitals is not enjoyable for me. By the way, with all the hospital visits I've done, and all the people I've prayed for asking for their healing, not one of them has suddenly gotten up out of their hospital bed. So, what's the point of this? My visit probably won't make any difference to this guy."

Yes, I was a knot-head, stubborn, disrespectful, and with my priorities aligned with my sense of importance, not humble before the Lord concerning this trip. I'm amazed that the Lord was patient with me allowing me to complain for almost sixty miles.

Upon arrival, while walking through the parking lot my thought was, "Ok Lord. Let's see why this is so important." My confidence in my own judgment continued.

The guy's room was at the end of the hall on the right, so I quickly walked there to get this thing done. As I stopped at the door before entering the room, I saw a bed with the curtains pulled all around. The lights off, and the shades pulled. I thought, "Well that can't be him if he's getting out this afternoon."

Then I stuck my head in the door and looked at the other end of this large room. Ah-ha! There was a man sitting up in bed, lights on, and shades up with daylight filling his part of the room. "That's got to be who I'm looking for," and in I went.

Yes, that was the person I'd come to visit. We spent a few minutes talking about his surgery and recovery process, his church, and his family. Following this I lead us in prayer. Our conversation was good, and beyond the fact that anyone's prayer is special to the Lord, my prayer was not unique in any way. We shook hands, said our "see you later" standard guy thing, and I turned around ready to leave.

There was that bed shrouded in darkness that made me wonder who might be in there, and what their problem might be. My only thought was, "Lord!?"

As I walked by there was a small gap in the curtains at the bottom righthand corner of the bed, and couldn't stop myself from a quick peek while walking on my way out.

All I could see was the dark outline of a man's head with all features lost in the shadows, with the covers pulled up to the person's neck. There was no pause in my walk, but when passing by the center-line of the bed I was stopped in my tracks.

Out from the curtains came a low rough sounding voice, clear but quiet, "Young man" he said. Standing there looking at the curtains I replied simply, "Yes".

He continued, "I just want to tell you how much your prayer meant to me." My reply was, "Well, praise the Lord."

Now I was also thinking, "Never had that happen before. Wasn't even praying for him." Still I was thankful that it'd made a difference in his life. I waited briefly to see if he'd say anything else, but all was quiet so I turned to leave the room.

There was a problem. Standing in the doorway was a nurse, white dress, shoes, and special hat holding a white medical tray to give the man, lost in the shadows, his medicine. The problem was her eyes were wide open, as was her mouth with a look of shock while standing petrified with her right shoulder against the door jam. That was different, even strange, but I still needed to be on my way.

We stood there about four feet apart, with me standing still wondering what was happening, and the nurse caught in this blank stare at the curtains around the bed with her face frozen in fear. I waited, but she didn't move. So, I thought I'd try taking one step forward to indicate I wanted to leave. She remained frozen in place, and there still was no reason for her reaction that was apparent to me.

This whole thing suddenly felt very weird. When I took the step in her direction, without changing her expression, she began to back out around the door jam as though she was hinged to the door jam on her right shoulder. With short, unsure steps she continued around until her back hit the wall of the hallway outside of the room.

There she came to an abrupt stop with a slight reverberation from head to toe, while still locked in the same stance, and the same shocked look on her face. I'd followed her out of the door, and was now concerned for her, so I stopped in front of her and asked, "Are you Ok?"

Two or three seconds passed with no change. Then her mouth slowly began to partially close and open, again and again, several times while her eyes remained wide open. After several attempts to get her mouth closed she was successful, and her eyelids began to flutter.

After her lips touched several times as though she was trying to say something she finally said, "Bu, bu, but you don't understand. He had cancer in his throat and his voice box was totally removed. It's impossible for him to talk." My brilliant response was, "Well, he talked to me."

Since it didn't look like she was going to pass out I started to leave with the hair standing up a bit on the back of my neck. It was then the Lord strongly spoke within my mind saying, "Harvey, do you understand yet. You just do what I tell you, because as you've seen, you have no idea what I'm doing. I am doing much more than you will ever know."

My drive back home was occupied by letting the Lord's words sink into my mind and heart, filling me with the amazing wonder of all that God is doing. Confessing my mistakes, and thanking God for His teaching. Humbled? Yes. More dedicated to listening to the Lord and remaining obedient? Definitely.

It was a lesson learned long ago that I've never forgotten. Everywhere I go, as God leads me, I wonder what else the Lord is doing, and I thank Him that I get to be a part of His work. Thank You, Jesus! I love You!

Some of us feel being obedient to the Lord is hard work, an imposition on our time and freedom. The Truth is one of our greatest privileges on this earth is to be able to obey God. Something learned the hard way by me, repeatedly, is the fact that obeying God is the best and easiest things we can do.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)